

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER
TIME

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

U.S. ECONOMY CONTINUES TO
GROW AND FLOURISH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a few minutes to talk about the economy. We have all kinds of news rushing around here, but I think it is very important for us to talk about the economy and what we as Republicans have done on this pro-growth issue. It is unfortunate that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, when it comes to the economy, seem to offer nothing more than a coordinated chorus of contrarian criticism. I mean, they have offered no positives, just complaints.

So I want to take a moment to shine some light on the recent good news concerning the economy. Because of Republican pro-growth, pro-trade, pro-innovation policies, our economy is strong by virtually every single measure. Just today, just a few hours ago, the Commerce Department announced that the economy grew at a 3.8 percent rate in the fourth quarter. Now, that is ahead of expectations; well, well ahead of the second quarter rate of growth and, Mr. Speaker, it marks the 16th consecutive quarter of growth that we have seen. This is especially remarkable to see this 3.8 percent growth figure, given the hurricanes that decimated cities and towns, crippled trade, and devastated energy production along the gulf coast.

So even having gone through these horrible natural disasters, we have been able to see this amazingly strong 3.8 percent GDP growth rate.

We have found that our economy has been able to weather these storms. Overall, as we know, Mr. Speaker, we have a 5.1 percent unemployment rate, which is lower than the average in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. There are 142 million Americans working, the greatest number in our Nation's history; and over the past 28 months, the economy has added more than 4 million new jobs.

In every single quarter since Congress passed the President's tax cut package in 2003, economic growth has been very vigorous. In 2004, real GDP growth was 4.4 percent, the strongest annual performance in 5 years and one of the strongest growth performances of the past 2 decades.

Our housing market also remains very, very strong. A record 74 million

Americans own their own homes; and for the first time, Mr. Speaker, minority Americans own their own homes at the highest level that we have ever seen.

Now, what does all this mean for the American people? It means job opportunities and entrepreneurship, it means achieving the dream of homeownership, and it means a better quality of life.

Now, as the people affected by hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma rebuild their lives, the best thing we can do here in the Congress is to make sure the economy stays strong and continues growing. Now, Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues know very well, Republicans have taken action to keep the economy on the right track to keep it growing. We are following our pro-growth agenda of tax relief, tort reform, energy solutions, and fiscal restraint.

The tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 have allowed hard-working Americans to keep more of what they earn. Now, this has led, as we all know, to increased investment, increased economic opportunity, and more Federal revenue coming into the Treasury. Recent history has shown that when government takes less money from the people, the people invest and spend more and Federal revenues go up. In 2004, following the 2003 tax cut package, Federal receipts grew by 14 percent. We cut taxes, and Federal receipts grew.

Because of this tax cut that has fueled our economic growth, the Federal budget deficit for the fiscal year 2005 fell \$94 billion, a 22 percent reduction in the deficit over the past year. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is outstanding progress in just 1 year; and contrary to what critics have said, it proves that low taxes and lowering the deficit do, in fact, go hand in hand.

We are also putting a stop to frivolous litigation that clogs our courts and drains the profits from small business owners. In the last 2 weeks, Congress has passed three bills that honor the purpose of our legal system and make it harder for lawyers to file junk lawsuits.

We have taken action to address high energy costs. Just a few weeks ago, the House took an important step to boost our gasoline refinery capacity to help stabilize the price of gasoline in the long run.

Now, I have noted that the GAS Act was passed unfortunately without a single vote from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. To me, that is absolutely astounding. It is astounding to me that not a single Member of the minority would vote in favor of this effort to increase refinery capacity and deal with the issue of price-gouging. In the face of high energy prices that are making it hard for the American people to make ends meet, Democrats unfortunately feel constrained to continue to build this great wall of obstruction.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential that we do everything that we can

to keep the economy growing, to focus on reduced energy prices; and we have the policies to do just that. We must continue them.

□ 1330

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

IRAQ AND CONSTITUENT LEADERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq is like one of those bridges in Alaska. You can give it all the money in the world, but in the end it goes nowhere.

People all around the country are waking up to the fact that this war is not making the United States safer, like the President promised. It is actually jeopardizing our national security.

It is the very presence of nearly 150,000 American troops on Iraqi soil, appearing as occupiers, that galvanizes and unites the dissatisfied people in the Arab world.

The American people get this, people like Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in Iraq. Cindy has been calling on the President to bring the troops home for months now. Her mission is a righteous one, that of a grieving mother who simply wants to know what noble cause her son was killed for.

People in groups get it, like the members the northern California Ruth Group, who turned out in the hundreds to call for an end of the war last weekend. Over 500 people from my district joined me and fellow Members of Congress, Ms. LEE and Ms. WATERS, and Cindy Sheehan at an important Ruth Group event to discuss ending the war. I have to tell you, discuss is a bit of an understatement. These folks are through discussing. They want our troops home. They want the war to be over.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of individuals like Cindy Sheehan and the members of the Ruth Group around the country, all calling on their government to quickly end the war in Iraq and bring our servicemen and women home. They join with 66 percent of